

To: Carey, Curtis[Carey.Curtis@epa.gov]
From: Purchia, Liz
Sent: Wed 10/21/2015 1:06:26 PM
Subject: Fwd: HuffPo: As Underground Fire Smolders Near Radioactive Waste, EPA Dismisses Concerns

Did you get in touch with the reporter?

Liz Purchia
U.S. EPA
202-564-6691
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Begin forwarded message:

From: "Purchia, Liz" <Purchia.Liz@epa.gov>
Date: October 20, 2015 at 6:18:46 PM EDT
To: "Carey, Curtis" <Carey.Curtis@epa.gov>, "Distefano, Nichole" <DiStefano.Nichole@epa.gov>, "Grantham, Nancy" <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>
Subject: HuffPo: As Underground Fire Smolders Near Radioactive Waste, EPA Dismisses Concerns

This is in Huffington Post. These are the types of stories that we need to be part of and explain that we are part of the community and working with them to keep them informed. We don't want to appear dismissive.

Curtis – I'd recommend you give this reporter a call and push back strongly on this headline. We are not dismissing concerns.

As Underground Fire Smolders Near Radioactive Waste, EPA Dismisses Concerns

But the state attorney general isn't having it: "The people of Missouri can't afford to wait any longer."



Sebastian MurdockReporter, The Huffington Post

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Posted: 10/20/2015 05:50 PM EDT | Edited: 12 minutes ago

A St. Louis-area community is on edge as a 5-year-old fire burning underneath a landfill threatens to interact with nearby nuclear waste, with potentially deadly consequences.

Residents in Bridgeton, Missouri, met in a packed church Thursday to discuss a solution to the growing problem that has county and school officials talking [emergency evacuation plans](#), according to Fox 2 Now.

The underground Bridgeton Landfill fire -- which in itself is not an unusual occurrence -- is just a quarter-mile away from [8,700 tons of buried barium sulfate](#) at West Lake Landfill, the Los Angeles Times reported. The waste came from the government's Manhattan Project, which created the nuclear weapons that helped end WWII.

Despite the Environmental Protection Agency's assurance that [there is no health threat](#), Missouri's Attorney General Chris Koster isn't buying it. In September, Koster [released damning reports](#) of radiological contamination seeping out of the earth. The attorney general's office is now prosecuting Republic Services Inc., which manages the landfill.

"These reports underscore what has been clear from the beginning -- Republic Services does not have this site under control," Koster said in a statement. "Not only does the landfill emit a foul odor, it appears that it has poisoned its neighbors' groundwater and vegetation. The people of Missouri can't afford to wait any longer -- Republic needs to get this site cleaned up."

In its response to Koster's investigation, the EPA said that "people living near and working outside the boundary of the West Lake Landfill are not currently being exposed to contaminants ... that are above a level of concern."

If the fire reaches the waste, there is ["potential for radioactive fallout to be released"](#) in the smoke plume and spread throughout the region," county officials warned in October 2014. There are no barriers between the ever-present fire and the nearby nuclear waste. Ed Smith, with the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, told the LA Times that even if the fire burns out, the radioactive waste may still cause problems.

Heather Lankford was one of 400 others at Thursday's church meeting voicing concerns about the waste.

"It's very scary, I can't imagine forfeiting [my children's] future," Lankford told Fox 2 News.

Liz Purchia

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